

***Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change
Toward Right Relationship with America's Native Peoples***

The Indigenous Peoples Concerns committee of the Boulder Friends Meeting developed this workshop in response to a call from Indigenous leaders at the United Nations. In his report on US compliance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, the UN Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Peoples Rights, stated:

“What really is needed is greater awareness by the broader American public...of the continuity of Indigenous Peoples within the American social political fabric...and reconciliation for the historical and ongoing wrongs that have occurred....With greater awareness, people can take actions that are appropriate to their local circumstances.”

Our workshop is a response to this call for greater awareness and action. It traces the historic and ongoing impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery, the 15th-century justification for European subjugation of non-Christian peoples. Our goal is to raise our level of knowledge and concern about these impacts, recognize them in ourselves and our institutions, and explore how we can begin to “take actions that are appropriate to our local circumstances.”

The 2-hour workshop consists of a 45-minute participatory exercise, followed by a period of reflection and discussion, and a concluding exercise.

During the first 45 minutes, four speakers read a script in the voices of (1) the Native Peoples of Turtle Island, the land that is now called the United States, (2) the European colonizers of the United States, (3) Western historians, and (4) a Narrator. The workshop participants stand (or sit on chairs, as needed) on a circle of blankets that represent the land mass of the United States. The participants represent the original inhabitants of this land, before 1492. As the four speakers relate the chronology of colonization, the participants symbolically experience its impacts on the Indigenous peoples and their land. The script ends with a story of a reconciliation and healing process that is happening now. Our hope is that it will motivate and inspire participants to take actions toward healing among all the peoples of our land.

At the end of the participatory exercise, we enter into a 40-minute period of reflection and sharing, using a "talking circle" format. Participants share their responses to the exercise, speaking from the heart and out of their own experience. Another short exercise concludes the workshop. Evaluation forms and a Resource Kit are distributed.

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